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TAGS: [PREL](#) [CG](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: SAG SENDS MUFAMADI TO DRC TO TRY TO CALM TENSIONS

REF: KINSASHA 353 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond Brown. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[11](#). (U) Sydney Mufamadi, Minister of Local and Provincial Government, will travel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as President Mbeki's special envoy to negotiate a solution to the crisis between President Kabila and opposition leader Jean-Pierre Bemba. Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad announced Mufamadi's mission on March 23 at his regular press briefing. Pahad said that the South African Government is "deeply concerned about the outbreak of violence," and that Mufamadi had already spoken with the key players. South Africa has spent "a significant amount of money and human resources" on the DRC peace process, Pahad stressed, and it would be "a tragic moment for Africa" if things went wrong.

[12](#). (C) Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Director for the DRC Gabriel Setlhoke told PolOff March 23 that the Mufamadi mission was a presidential initiative. Neither he nor DFA Chief Director Tselani Mokuena were aware of the Mufamadi trip before Pahad's public announcement.

[12](#). (SBU) BEMBA UPDATE: Sethloke confirmed that opposition leader Bemba remains on the South African Embassy compound in Kinsasha, although he has not asked for asylum. According to Institute for Security Studies analyst Henri Boshoff, who spoke with South African military staff in Kinsasha, DRC officials wanted South Africa to hand over Bemba for "treason," but that the South African Embassy officials had refused.

[13](#). (SBU) MUFAMADI BIO NOTE: Mufamadi was widely praised for his key role in the DRC peace negotiations. He is said to be close to President Mbeki. The 48-year-old Mufamadi served as Minister of Safety and Security from 1994-99 before taking on the local government portfolio in 1999. Mbeki often appoints Cabinet allies for diplomatic tasks, such as Safety and Security Minister Ngakula as Burundi envoy, even if their core portfolios are unrelated to foreign policy.
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